



**Language Awareness Infrastructure Support Service
Clinical Collaboration Cymru**

Research Strategy

Introduction

Increasing global diversity and the enhanced status of many minority languages worldwide provide mounting challenges for health and social care providers to maintain an individualized approach to communication in service delivery. Language barriers arising from cross-cultural encounters are widely reported in the literature and these invariably lead to communication problems that often jeopardize the therapeutic relationship and quality of care provision in health and social care (Jacobs et al 2006). Nevertheless, attempts to overcome such barriers are emerging and the impact of these interventions on health outcomes is more frequently being evaluated (DoHHS 2004). Despite the unique status of Welsh as the indigenous language of Wales, Welsh speakers report language barriers on accessing health and social care services (Misell 2000) and these often reflect the wider experiences of minority language speakers worldwide (Roberts et al 2005). There is thus an overwhelming call to enhance Welsh language awareness across the health and social care sector in Wales and an urgent need to expand the evidence base to support language appropriate practice in Wales and beyond. This document sets out a research strategy for LLAIS, the Language Awareness Infrastructure Support Service of Clinical Research Collaboration Cymru, wherein plans are outlined to increase the potential for research and development in language awareness in health and social care as a means of improving and enhancing the health and well-being of service users in Wales.

Context

According to the 2001 Census, over half a million people across Wales speak Welsh, representing 21% of the total population (National Assembly for Wales 2003). Although indigenous to Wales, the language was excluded from the official and public domain for over four centuries. Thus, along with many other native European languages, Welsh became a minority language, in terms of its relative power and status (European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages 1998). Nevertheless, despite its long history of oppression, recent language legislation has led to the revitalization and enhanced status of the Welsh language in Wales and there are increasing efforts to mainstream its provision in public services (WAG 2003). This is particularly evident in health and social care, where language sensitivity is fundamental to the quality of service provision (WAG 2005).

However, despite these indications, there is evidence of a significant shortfall in the Welsh language awareness of practitioners in Wales and a lack of commitment within healthcare organizations to plan for Welsh language provision (Misell 2000, Roberts et al 2004). Such deficiencies have been shown to compromise the quality of care and treatment of Welsh speakers. Furthermore, they contravene statutory requirements for bilingual provision in public services, as outlined in the Welsh Language Act (1993). Thus, although an individualized and holistic approach is central to the philosophy and delivery of healthcare services (Welsh Assembly Government 2005), there is evidence to suggest that language barriers in healthcare may jeopardize the health chances of Welsh speakers as minority language service users in Wales. This is particularly true for vulnerable groups, such as young children, older people, those with mental health problems and people with learning disabilities; for whom denying language choice can lead to misdiagnosis and inappropriate treatment (Misell 2000).

Arguably, the evidence to support such a claim is largely anecdotal and limited to a modest number of small scale qualitative studies cited by Misell (2000). However, a recent systematic review of the international literature focusing on language barriers amongst service users whose preferred language is not English confirms the detrimental effects of language deficits in practice (Roberts et al 2005). Moreover, it gives rise to recurrent themes concerning the significance of language and language choice to minority speakers as a means of increasing the uptake of healthcare services (Bernstein et al 2002); enhancing client satisfaction (Timmins 2002, Flores 2005); and improving the cost effectiveness of healthcare delivery (Jacobs et al 2004). Although these studies draw on the experiences of speakers of non-indigenous languages, Thomas (1994) and May (2000) claim that, because of the marginalization of minority languages, their speakers share common experiences, including discriminatory attitudes, linguistic oppression and linguistic assimilation. Thus, by comparing the broader impact of language interventions in health and social care, there is potential to enhance our understanding of language appropriate practice in Wales and inform the process of linguistic and cultural normalization for policy and practice.

In summary, language awareness is an important concept in health and social care, particularly in relation to cross-cultural communication, but further research is required in order to examine the dimensions of language awareness in service delivery and its impact on enhancing the health and well-being of service users in Wales.

Definitions

Language sensitivity is defined as ‘...the ability to recognize the power of language and in what circumstances such power can be abused or misused in reinforcing or establishing patterns of inequality or discrimination. (Thompson 2003, pg 116).

Language awareness is defined as ‘a person’s sensitivity to and conscious awareness of the nature of language and its role in human life.’ (Donmall 1985, pg 7).

The literature calls for an integrated approach toward *language appropriate practice*, where equal emphasis is placed on nurturing language sensitivity as well as ensuring appropriate levels of language proficiency amongst practitioners (Davies, 1999; Misell, 2000). This model reflects the wider concept of *language awareness*, as described by James and Garrett (1991) that incorporates several dimensions, including language proficiency and confidence as well as attitude, motivation and actual usage.

Vision

By 2009 LLAIS will have established processes that will increase the potential for the funding of research and development in language awareness in health and social care as a means of improving and enhancing the health and well-being of service users in Wales.

Values and Beliefs

In achieving this vision LLAIS **values**:

- The willingness of CRC Cymru to share expertise and resources.
- The opportunities for research and development that arise from collaborative working with Thematic Research Networks.
- The opportunities to network with other professionals and agencies in order to develop research knowledge and skills.
- The significance of establishing collaborative research partnerships across a range of minority language communities.

LLAIS **believes** that:

- Language awareness research and development is essential across all domains of health and social care but particularly so in the context of Welsh language services and amongst vulnerable groups, as defined by Misell (2000), i.e. people with mental health problems, people with learning disabilities, children and older people.
- Raising language awareness across CRC Cymru enables research and development that informs language appropriate practice.
- There are staff across the research community who have the interest and potential to engage in research and development on language awareness

Background

Research and Development Infrastructure for Wales: CRC Cymru

Clinical Research Collaboration Cymru (CRC Cymru) was established in 2006 as a new research and development infrastructure for Wales. Its mission is to:

“...provide an internationally competitive research infrastructure for health and social care to improve the health and wealth of Wales.”

The following elements have been established in order to facilitate the work of CRC Cymru:

- Academic research network (AWARD)
- Ten Thematic Research Networks (TRNs)
- Four Infrastructure Support Services of which LLAIS is one service
- Health Information Research Unit (HIRU)
- Co-ordinating Centre (CRC Cymru CC)

LLAIS

The Language Awareness Support Service (LLAIS) was established in 2006 to support language awareness across the new R & D infrastructure for Wales, CRC Cymru. The overall **mission** of LLAIS is to ensure that health and social care research in Wales takes full account of the bilingual nature of Wales and its speakers; and to

enhance the delivery of health and social care services to Welsh speakers in Wales. Its main strategic **aims** are thus to:

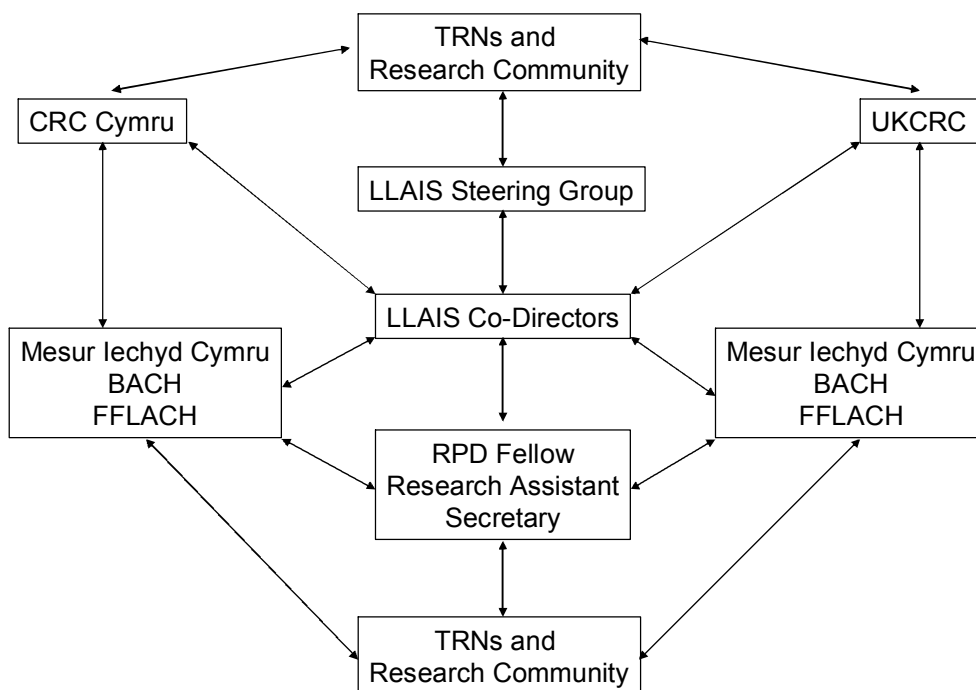
- Provide advice and support to CRC Cymru on enhancing Welsh language awareness in health and social care research
- Develop a research portfolio on culture and language appropriate services in health and social care
- Enable the engagement of key stakeholders in the planning and conduct of research in relation to Welsh language awareness
- Enable the integration of relevant research findings into mainstream policy and practice

These aims are achieved through the following **objectives**:

- To raise awareness of the implications of language choice for service users in relation to clinical, legislative and statutory requirements
- To increase opportunities for TRNs to take account of the Welsh language and culture in the planning of research and development projects
- To enhance Welsh language and cultural awareness at each stage of the research process
- To increase opportunities for key stakeholders to be involved in the planning and conduct of research in relation to Welsh language awareness
- To contribute to the integration of research findings into policy and practice relevant to the needs of Welsh language speakers
- To increase the quality and quantity of research in health and social care in relation to the needs of Welsh speakers

LLAIS is headed by Professor Fiona Irvine, Liverpool John Moores University and Gwerfyl Roberts, Bangor University. The steering group is made up of eight core members across Wales who represent a range of stakeholders in health and social care, from service providers and purchasers to educationalists, researchers, policy advisors and service user representatives. Working in partnership across the infrastructure, LLAIS is in a unique and privileged position that will enable it to establish research collaborations with thematic research networks across Wales and enhance the evidence base to support language and cultural awareness in health and social care. The recent grant uplift awarded to LLAIS to extend its research portfolio has enabled the team to expand and a new research portfolio development fellow (Gwerfyl Roberts); research assistant (Siobhan Tranter); and research project support officer (Heledd Owen) have recently been appointed. This has facilitated the revision of key positions and the re-structuring of LLAIS since its inception, as outlined in Figure 1.

Figure 1: LLAIS Structure and Networks



Policy Drivers for Language and Cultural Awareness in Health and Social Care

United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

The Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities published by UNESCO in 1992 reaffirms that one of the basic aims of the United Nations, as proclaimed in the Charter, is to promote and encourage respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion.

Article 1 outlines the responsibilities of states to protect the existence and the national or ethnic, cultural and linguistic identity of minorities within their respective territories; whilst encouraging conditions for the promotion of that identity; and adopting appropriate legislative and other measures to achieve those ends. Further to this, Article 2 states that persons belonging to national or ethnic linguistic minorities have the right to enjoy their own culture and to use their own language, in private and in public, freely and without interference or any form of discrimination.

European Commission (EC)

Among the fundamental aims of the Council of Europe are the protection and promotion of the wealth and diversity of Europe’s cultural heritage. Regional or minority languages are very much part of this heritage and member states of the Council of Europe are encouraged to confirm their commitment to the protection of this heritage by ratifying the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (1992). The Charter is a convention designed to protect and promote regional and minority languages as a threatened aspect of Europe’s cultural heritage, whilst enabling speakers of a regional or minority language to use it in private and public

life. The ratification of the Charter by the UK Government in 2001 signifies its commitment to actively promote the use of all the UK minority languages, including Welsh, in public services.

Department of Health (DH)

The Department of Health's Equality Framework (DH 2003) demonstrates the Department's commitment to improve the health and well-being of the population through a health and social care system which:

- is provided equally to those who need it, free at the point of need
- offers a personal service which is truly patient-centred
- has sufficiently increased capacity to enable choice and diversity to be offered to patients
- is fair and provides equity of access to care.

The framework suggests that only by building equality into every aspect of care delivery will a truly patient centred and responsive service be established which provides equal access to services, meeting the needs and wishes of all groups within society.

The guide on developing local communication support services and strategies, published by the DH in 2004, sets out key recommendations for commissioners and planners to consider in relation to communication support services. These include standards or good practice guidelines to assist organisations so that they can ensure that they are commissioning and delivering language appropriate services in compliance with legislative requirements and relevant policy considerations.

Welsh Assembly Government (WAG)

In light of the Welsh Language Act (1993), there are legal and statutory requirements for public bodies throughout Wales, including health and social care providers, to offer services through the medium of Welsh as well as English, giving equality to both languages. This is reflected in the Welsh Language Schemes of NHS Trusts, Local Health Boards and Local Authorities across Wales, where there is commitment towards extending bilingual provision and enhancing language choice for patients and clients. Such assurance is underpinned by the Welsh Language Scheme of the Welsh Assembly Government (2005); the National Action Plan for a Bilingual Wales (Welsh Assembly Government (2003) and the National Strategy for Health and Social Care (2005) where language choice is seen as an essential component in the provision of quality care services.

LLAIS Research Portfolio: Current Position

Founded by researchers at the School of Healthcare Sciences, Bangor University, LLAIS reflects the School's commitment towards promoting research into bilingualism in health and social care and language appropriate practice, as highlighted in its Language Policy (2004). This theme has been well established within the School for over a decade and, more recently, channeled through the school's Language and Cultural Awareness in Health and Social Care Thematic Research Group.

In response to curriculum planning requirements, early studies focused on the determinants for bilingual provision in healthcare education (Roberts & Paden 2000).

Significant competitive grant capture from the main commissioning bodies in Wales subsequently led to a proliferation of collaborative research projects focusing on language awareness in health and social care and the role of healthcare professionals in facilitating language choice, particularly for vulnerable service users (Irvine et al 2006; Muntz et al 2004; Roberts et al 2003; Roberts et al 2005; Roberts et al 2007; Spencer et al 2007). International links facilitated further opportunities for cross-language studies (Irvine et al 2007).

The Scoping Study on Language Awareness in Health and Social Care (Roberts et al 2005) highlighted a paucity of rigorous research in this arena. Moreover, it demonstrated a continuing need for research and development in order to build the evidence base to support and disseminate language appropriate practice. The main output of LLAIS in this respect is to increase the quantity and quality of research on language awareness that is relevant to policy and practice. Although LLAIS is primarily concerned with Welsh language issues, many of the findings from these research activities will be generalisable across other minority language communities.

The long-term sustainability of LLAIS depends on the availability of funds for R&D in language awareness. Unlike many research networks that are disease-specific, there is no obvious UK or European funding stream outside Wales to support the research activities of LLAIS; and the evidence-base from the UK on the role of language awareness in health and social care is slow to emerge. Nevertheless, there are a host of vulnerable service users in Wales whose care is likely to be enhanced through language appropriate practice; and this is particularly the case for older people, young children, people with learning disabilities and people with mental health problems (Misell 2000). Given that all of these vulnerable groups are represented within the TRNs of CRC Cymru and UKCRC, there are valuable opportunities for LLAIS to collaborate in research studies that examine secondary issues investigating the impact of language interventions on the health outcomes of these vulnerable client groups. Successful collaboration with TRNs will thus enhance the sustainability of LLAIS' research.

During the last 12 months, LLAIS has established a strategy for the development of its research portfolio, according to three strands, as outlined in Table 1; and, in light of recent discussions across the research infrastructure in Wales and beyond, there is encouraging potential for the development of collaborative research across these levels. More recently, LLAIS has established two Research Development Groups (RDGs) in Wales; one relating to the translation and validation of research instruments (Mesur Iechyd Cymru) led by the University of Wales Bangor; and the other relating to language appropriate practice for children, led by the University of Glamorgan. The RDGs act as think tanks for LLAIS, engaging members in active dialogue in order to identify multi-disciplinary research priorities, generate research questions and develop specific, targeted research proposals. It is proposed that, through identifying and mobilizing appropriate specialist expertise and collaborators, the quality and rigour of research proposals will be enhanced and this will maximize their potential for external funding.

Table 1: Proposed Strands of LLAIS Research Activities

Strand	Study Type	Example	Potential Collaborators	Potential Funding Source	LLAIS Role
Facilitative	Research studies that build the tools to facilitate language awareness in health and social care research and practice delivery	The translation and validation of health outcome measures for the Welsh language	TRNs Methodology Group UB	WORD North Wales Research Committee	Principal Investigator
		Establishing national standards in research to underpin the delivery of culturally and linguistically appropriate health and social care	WEDHS Involving People TRNs UKCRC	ESRC	Collaborative Lead

Strand	Study Type	Example	Potential Collaborators	Potential Funding Source	LLAIS Role
Descriptive	Descriptive research studies that systematically identify the status of Welsh language provision in health and social care and generate questions for further research	Collaborative study with LDAN exploring issues of language and identity amongst people with learning disabilities	TRNs Methodology Group UKCRC	WORD UK Charities ESRC	Collaborative Lead

Level	Study Type	Example	Potential Collaborators	Potential Funding Source	LLAIS Role
Empirical	Research studies that measure the impact of language appropriate services on health outcomes; and inform service delivery	<p>Multi-centre investigation of the impact of bilingual health and social care services on health outcomes of minority language speakers</p> <p>Collaborative studies that evaluate language appropriate service delivery models and establish best practice</p>	<p>TRNs UKCRC European partners US partners Australian partners Canadian partners</p>	<p>WORD MRC ESRC International funding, e.g. INTERREG IV Programme</p>	Collaborative Lead

Aims and Objectives:

By 2009 LLAIS will have developed its research capacity to: attract research funding; increase the quality of its output; create the potential for further collaborative working; and facilitate the use of the evidence base in order to enhance language appropriate policy and practice.

This will be achieved through the following key **objectives**:

1. Secure sustainable research funding
2. Increase research capacity and capability
3. Collaborate at local, national and international level
4. Disseminate research findings

LLAIS Research Strategy: Strategic Framework

Objective	Action	Measure
1. Secure sustainable research funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure funding through competitive tendering from major funding bodies in Wales • Secure collaborative funding from major UK/European funding bodies • Secure collaborative funding from international funding bodies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New funding awarded from major Welsh funding bodies • UK / European collaborative funding awarded • International collaborative funding awarded
2. Increase capacity and capability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply for PhD scholarships from all Wales funding sources • Apply for PhD scholarships from funding sources external to Wales • Extend capacity and capability through above grant capture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Wales funded PhD scholarships secured • PhD scholarships secured from funding sources external to Wales • Current research staff secured • Increased numbers of active researchers within LLAIS
3. Collaborate at local, national and international level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop research links across local health and social care organizations • Develop national collaborative research links with colleagues at CRC Cymru and UKCRC through LLAIS • Develop international research links through networking and international conferences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative grant proposal submissions • Joint publications
4. Disseminate research findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissemination of research findings to key stakeholders • Plan and target publications at national and international level • Plan and target conference presentations at national and international level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active dialogue with key stakeholders concerning implementation of research findings • Papers accepted for publication • Peer reviewed papers presented at international conferences • Host a LLAIS conference

LLAIS Research Strategy: Operational Framework

Strand of Research Activity	Focus	Collaborator(s)	Potential Funding	Progress
Facilitative	Welsh translation and validation of the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI-11)	Mesur Iechyd Cymru	NWRC	Proposal under development Closing date January 2008
Facilitative	Teaching pack to enhance language awareness in research for health and social care students	Panel Rhwydwaith Nyrzio	HEFCW	£5K awarded to LLAIS October 2007 – June 2008
Facilitative	Informing policy and practice on Welsh language use in healthcare through corpus linguistic analysis	Nottingham University Bangor University	Leverhulme Trust AHRC	Discussions underway with colleagues at Bilingualism Centre, Bangor University and Nottingham University
Facilitative	Generating natural language data sets for health informatics	Bangor University Trinity College Dublin University College Dublin	INTERREG IV Programme, European Commission	Thematic strand of Bangor University proposal. Awaiting call November 2007 Discussions underway with colleagues at Bangor University, Trinity College, Dublin, University College Dublin and ENWI
Descriptive	Scoping study of Welsh language provision in learning disability services	LDAN	WAG	Commissioning rejected. Seeking alternative funding source from WAG
Descriptive	Scoping study of Welsh medium provision in nurse education	Nursing Network Panel	HEFCW	Proposal submitted for £20K Awaiting decision Work to commence March 2008
Empirical	Welsh language provision in older people's healthcare services; a survey of user perspectives	To be confirmed	WORD	Proposal under development

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